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THE TIWI OF MELVILLE AND BATHURST ISLANDS

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MELVILLE and Bathurst Islands lie off the north coast of Australia (3) some fifty to eighty miles north-east of Port Darwin. They are divided from the mainland by Dundas Straits, which at their narrowest part are about twenty-five miles wide, this being the approximate distance between the Vernon Group and Cape Gambier on Melville Island. The latter is the largest island in the Commonwealth of Australia with the exception of Tasmania, being some seventy miles long by forty miles wide, and containing about one and a half million acres. Bathurst Island is about one-third of that size, and is separated from its neighbour by Apsley Strait, which varies in width from about a quarter of a mile opposite the mission to two or three miles below Fort Dundas.

The first settlement in Northern Australia was made on Melville 175 Island at a spot named Fort Dundas in Apsley Strait. It was founded on the 26th September, 1824, by Captain Gordon Bremer, R.N., of H.M.S. *Tamar*, who had been specially sent from Sydney for the purpose. Chiefly owing to difficulties with the natives, the settlement was abandoned on 31st March, 1829, when the convicts, troops, stores, etc., were transferred to Fort Wellington, on the Coburg Peninsula of the mainland. To-day a few piles of stones and a dilapidated ramparted ditch are all that is to be seen of this outpost of empire.

From 1829 until 1911, when the Sacred Heart Mission Station was established on Bathurst Island, no permanent settlement was made on either of these islands, though they were visited from time to time, and various buffalo shooters and timber-getters resided there for varying periods, the best-known of them, R. J. Cooper, having lived on Melville (where his house still stands) from 1894 until 1914. At present Bathurst 648 Island is a native reserve with the missionaries as protectors, and hence

¹ This paper contains some of the results of research carried out as Science Research Scholar of the University of Sydney and with the aid of a grant from the Australian National Research Council. [22]

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648 has no other white inhabitants, while Melville is held under lease by the meat firm known as Vestey's Ltd., but has no permanent white inhabitants, though occasionally campers, beachcombers, and hunters from Darwin stay there for a few months.

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All the earlier accounts lay stress on the ferocity and hostility of the natives of these islands, but long albeit intermittent contact with the whites has tamed them. At the present time it is no exaggeration to say that except for the Larakia, who are almost extinct, no tribe in the Northern Territory has so assimilated white ideas or is so familiar with white men. A proof of this is afforded by the fact that members of this tribe are more in demand in Darwin as houseboys than members of any other tribe, simply because, as it is generally expressed, they have more "savvy," that is they are more intelligent and more adaptable to white conditions.

But while their proximity to Darwin and their long experience of white men have taught them much of our ideas and customs, the absence of a permanent white settlement in their country with its consequent massacres and epidemics has on the other hand prevented their numbers being depleted and their social organization being broken down. It is therefore still possible to obtain fairly full and satisfactory information about the life and culture of these islands as they were before white influence began.

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The ferocity of these people, I am convinced, has been much exaggerated even by the earliest settlers. As a matter of fact their outstanding characteristic is not their fierceness but their sense of humour, as noted by Spencer. They are constantly laughing, even at the most solemn moments, and this applies to practically every man, woman and child on the island. I am inclined to think that their superior physique, which is very apparent, their huge spears—which incidentally they seldom use, except ceremonially—their striking method of painting their faces and their years of conflict with the Malays, which had accustomed them to stand and fight rather than to run at sight of a stranger, gained them in large part their evil reputation.

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In physical appearance they are certainly Australoid, but the men are on the whole taller, sturdier and better proportioned than any of the mainland tribes. This is obvious even in Darwin, where it is an easy matter to pick out almost at a glance a member of the Tiwi. I agree

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also with Sir Baldwin Spencer that they are superior to the mainlanders,

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not only in physique but also in intelligence. I should be surprised to find in any other Australian tribe a man with the intelligence and adaptability of my own head boy Mariano. 153

The flora and fauna of the two islands is very similar to that of the rest of the Northern Territory. The country is mostly flat with a low range of rocky hills between Cape Gambier and Cape Keith on Melville Island, and a still lower range in the centre of Bathurst. The timber consists of the usual Australian trees; gums, stringy-bark, woolly-butt, bloodwood and ironwood cover most of the two islands, broken here and there by patches of open grassland and in other places by dense patches of jungle where snakes and "devils" thrive and the natives seldom enter. Wallabies are extraordinarily plentiful, but there are no kangaroos. Buffaloes are found on Melville in small numbers. These are the wild descendants of the domestic Indian buffaloes imported for agricultural purposes by the early settlers at Fort Dundas. At one time they had increased and multiplied to such effect that thousands were shot every year without any appreciable effect upon their numbers. At the present time, however, probably owing to many of the cows being killed, there are probably not more than a thousand on the island. The natives are seldom able to kill a buffalo though they realise the fact that it is good to eat. 133 137 136

Not only are wallabies plentiful, but there is also an abundant supply of the other native articles of food, fish, crocodile, birds of all kinds, wild honey, yams and other native vegetables. As a result of this abundance of foods, it would seem that the two islands had a greater density of population than is to be found in almost any other part of Australia. 262 161

LOCAL ORGANIZATION

The people inhabiting Melville and Bathurst Islands are subdivided into a number of local groups. These local groups are the important sections of the population since they act as land-owning groups, war-making groups, have a solidarity of their own which is far stronger than any tribal solidarity that may exist and even to some extent regulate marriage. 62)

Before considering these hordes in detail, however, something must be said about the tribal name. All the hordes practise the same customs, speak the same language and inter-marry. The boundaries of the people speaking this language are of course strictly defined by the sea. In other words, the people of Melville and Bathurst have a solidarity of their own, 184 619

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184 they speak one language and they regard a certain defined area of land as
619 belonging to them.

[171] The Australian tribe is a collection of persons who speak a common
619 language, or what they themselves regard as such, practise the same
101 customs, and normally have a name by which they distinguish themselves
and their language. The inhabitants of Melville and Bathurst Islands
are therefore to be regarded as a single tribe, but it is difficult to find
a true tribal name. The Uwaidja of Port Essington call the Melville
Islanders, *Wuyuk*, as Spencer notes, but the Melville Islanders scarcely
regard it as necessary to call themselves anything. The local group of
186 which a man is conscious of being a member is the horde, and until the
648 advent of the white man, the Melville Islander was not aware that any
101 other people existed except themselves. It was impossible and also quite
unnecessary for them to visit the mainland in their bark canoes more
especially as the coast around Cape Don and Cape Hotham, dimly seen
[72] on clear days, was regarded as the abode of departed souls, *Tibambinumi*,
the home of the dead. It was apparently just as impossible or unnecessary,
or perhaps danger was the chief deterrent, for the Uwaidja or the Larakia
to visit Melville Island.

The result was that the people, with no contact with people not of
their own tribe, did not really need a tribal name, and very seldom used
the word *Tiwi*, which is the only one that can be regarded as the name of
the tribe.

101 *Tiwi* is a word that is known and but seldom used. Some of the
younger men were in fact surprised and interested when they heard the old
men using it in response to my enquiries. There is no question of
secrecy or tabu about it. In common everyday use are the words *tini*,
meaning a man of one of the Melville or Bathurst Island hordes, *i.e.*, a male
member of the *Tiwi*, and *tiga* meaning a female member of the tribe.
Tiwi is the plural form of *tini* and *tiga*. It is often said by informants
that *tini* means a man, and *tiga* a woman, irrespective of colour or race, but
in point of fact these words are only used as applying to members of the
Tiwi, and some other word would be used in referring to a white man, or a
Larakia or Uwaidja.

101 Objection may be made to the adoption as the tribal name of these
619 people of a word that theoretically at any rate seems simply "men" in the
ordinary language. But in point of fact the word is never used except

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in the same way as such words as Larakia, Worgaita, Uwaidja, etc., are used. For example, if a Melville Islander at home is asked who a certain group of natives are, he will reply in his own language that there are, e.g., two *Tiklanila* and two *Munupula*, these being horde names. Ask him the same question in Darwin about another group and he will reply, e.g., "*Yatapinti Tiwi, irira Larakia*" (four Tiwi and two Larakia); he does not mean to insult the Larakia by denying them the status of men; he is merely applying the term *Tiwi* to men of his own tribe. Should he be uncertain of the tribe of the other, he will say "*Yatapinti Tiwi, irira wanarni*" (literally "four Tiwi and two blackfellows"); *wanarni* being a term denoting black fellows as distinct from white men.

In other words, when at home on the Islands, a man thinks of himself as a *Tiklanila* or a *Munupula*, or whatever his horde may be, since there he feels strongly his bond of solidarity with the fellow members of his horde. When in contact with other tribes, however, as in Darwin, he thinks of himself as Tiwi, a member of a group which despite the divisions inside it, is nevertheless a group distinct from other tribes, and this seems quite an adequate reason for us to adopt Tiwi as the tribal name.

The hordes number nine, five on Melville and four on Bathurst Island. This division is not strictly accurate, as may be seen from the accompanying map; the *Malanila* territory, while mainly on Bathurst stretches across Apsley Strait on to Melville, while a portion of Bathurst Island, including the site of the Mission Station, is *Mandiimbula* territory.



MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF THE TIWI HORDES

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101 Like other concrete things in this culture, the hordes have a multi-
 621 plicity of names, and this has caused a certain amount of confusion and
 doubt as to their actual number. A full list of these names is as follows.
 The name most commonly used in each case by the natives themselves is
 given first in each case, as these are the names used throughout this
 account of the Tiwi culture.

1. *Tiklanila*: *Arupula*, *Matjulanila*, *Mulingabila*, *Tuyalimbila*, *Taljanila*,
Pilamiruntabila, *Aritwi*, *Wayigui*, *Adamnabila*, *Poyondigalwila*,
Puknginabila, *Primandwila*.
2. *Wragwila*: *Mungwainabila*, *Pulanarwila*, *Tintawila*.
3. *Miggwila*: *Wonurwila*, *Kalipranigwila*, *Malamikwaringabila*.
4. *Malawila*: *Mirkalambila*, *Pulandwila*, *Iwiriwila*, *Malamuyoringabila*,
Papingabila.
5. *Wilrangwila*: *Panodjiwila*, *Mirkawingabila*, *Marawanila*, *Kambuyam-
 bila*.
6. *Munupula*: *Urumaiawila*, *Tunugabila*, *Imalawila*, *Parumunupula*.
7. *Turnpula*: *Yugandwila*, *Tikampula*.
8. *Yeimpi*: *Arapontwila*, *Araggitarila*, *Palwingabila*.
9. *Mandiimbula*: *Tumnlambila*, *Tilambila*, *Urumaiungabila*, *Uruwinapila*,
Ilubingabila.

101 If Spencer's list* is compared with mine it will be seen that allowing
 114 for our different spellings, his "Kambuambulla" are really the *Marawanila*,
 621 his "Cherupulla" are the *Turnpula*, his "Purumunupulla" are really the
Munupula, his "Mindaluulla" probably mean the *Miggwila*. "Ulobu"
 (or *Ilubi*) is a place-name of a favourite camping ground in the country
 of the *Mandiimbula* slightly to the north-west of Cape Gambier; hence
Ilubingabila. "Marungallambu" similarly is a camping ground in the
 territory of the *Malawila*. "Barranpunalli" I am unable to trace;
Punali (or *Bunali*) is, however, the name for the district around the English
 Point Alley. "Arangijerulla" is an alternative name for the *Yeimpi*, but I
 prefer to spell it *Araggitarila*, while "Balaiungambulla" is obviously a
 misspelling of the *Palwingabila*, which is another alternative name for the
Yeimpi.

121 To explain this multiplicity of horde names, and also to throw some
 light on the actual composition of the horde, I propose to consider one of
 the hordes in detail, taking for this purpose the *Tiklanila*.

* Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory*, 1914, page 45.

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The territory of the *Tiklanila* is roughly contained in the area in the south of Bathurst Island, south of Point Hurd and west of *Mukambrimo*, which is a river about eight miles to the west of the mission station. In this area, roughly about two hundred square miles, there are a number of districts with specific names. Anyone familiar with the Australian blackfellow knows how certain districts are given certain names, and although no native can tell the exact boundaries, everyone in the tribe knows when he has come into one of these districts and when he has left it. The principle of differentiation of these areas seems to be upon the basis of the physical aspect of the country, a valley for example having a distinct name from either set of hills surrounding it, a plain being distinguished from a thickly-wooded piece of bushland on its margin, and so on.

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These districts play an important part in Tiwi land ownership. Certain districts are not owned by the horde as a whole, but by a single family of that horde. Thus in the horde we are considering, *Tagio*, the extensive district in the extreme south-western corner of the island around Cape Fouveroy, is owned by a single set of men, all of whom are the son's sons of *Mikidjimirla*, a man who as far as can be judged died about 1870-1880. The basis of their title is the fact that *Mikidjimirla* died and was buried in the district, hence all the game and fruit in *Tagio* belong to them, and cannot be hunted or collected by anyone else without their consent.

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The question immediately arises as to whether the mere burial of a man in a district gives his heirs property rights in that district. The Tiwi answer is that it always does if the man was sufficiently important. The man in question here, *Mikidjimirla*, was from all accounts one who left a deep impression on the society of his time both by his personality and by his prowess in warfare. More than that he left his mark on following generations by the number of children he had. At the present time, there are nine men, all grandchildren of *Mikidjimirla*, in whom the hunting and fruit-collecting rights of *Tagio* are vested, and these men and their families normally camp in *Tagio* and deny the right of other *Tiklanila* families to hunt there. This group has a solidarity of its own which is expressed by a name *Tagianwila*, which is one of the alternative horde-names. It should be noted in this connection that the Tiwi name for father's father is *amini*, and the members of this group will frequently

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423 refer to one another as *gia yirt' amini* (my "one grandfather") in preference
 613 to *gi'iwini* (my brother), or *gia kalipini* (my half-brother), which is the
 601 normal term of address.

423 A member of another horde found trespassing upon the territory
 685 of the *Tiklanila* would be killed immediately unless he had been invited for
 609 a corroboree or some such festival. A member of the same horde who,
 621 not belonging to the *yirt' amini* group, trespasses in *Tagio* would not be put
 to death, but he and his relatives would become embroiled in a serious
 quarrel with the group.

423 *Tagio* is the best example of this peculiar institution because being
 613 in an out-of-the-way peninsula no one needs to go there except people
 621 who have a right there. Consequently the *Tajianwila* can exercise a much
 stricter supervision and hence as a matter of fact guard their rights more
 jealously than the people with such rights over districts that lie upon
 the main roads of the two islands. Nevertheless the whole of *Tiklanila*
 is divided into such districts and the whole of the *Tiklanila* into such *yirt'*
amini groups.

Thus bordering on the *Tajianwila* to the east, we find the *Arupula*
 who have similar hunting and food-collecting rights over *Arupi*, the coastal
 district in the middle of the south coast of Bathurst Island. The origin of
 their title is lost in obscurity inasmuch as nobody to-day knows who the
 ancestor was or exactly where is the grave that gave them such a right.
 Nor is the *Arupula* title respected as much as is the *Tajianwila* partly
 because *Arupi* is crossed by several "high-roads"—notably the only
 road to *Tagio* from the east, and the *Wraggwila* road to the Mission Station
 —but even more because the present representatives of the *Arupula* are
 either uninitiated youths or peaceful old men.

423 This introduces what is perhaps the main factor in the perpetuation
 628 of this institution—the power of the *yirt' amini* groups to enforce their
 613 rights. The ownership of a particular territory by a horde and the
 685 punishment of trespass upon it can always be enforced because there is
 always a certain number of fighting men in the horde. Hence horde-
 ownership is respected. In the *yirt' amini* group, however, periods fre-
 quently occur when the group is not strong enough to enforce its claims,
 and unless the claims are constantly brought under the notice of the rest
 of the horde they are ignored. The result is that unless the family gets
 a new lease of life by boys growing up into formidable warriors, such a

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period is the prelude to the complete lapsing of the title to the district. 423
The prominent part played in this institution by the father's father and the 628
fact that most of the present districts held on such a title are held from the 613
father's father whereas comparatively few are held through an ancestor 685
(necessarily more remote) who has been forgotten, seems to indicate
that *yirt' amini* holdings do not last more than three generations before
they lapse for want of sufficient able-bodied men to enforce them.

It must not be imagined that the whole of Melville and Bathurst 423
Islands are divided into such holdings nor indeed that everyone in the tribe 613
belongs to such a group. The main obstacle to this lies in the self- 621
evident fact that if one's father's father dies in the territory of another
horde, as must have quite frequently have happened in the days of
marauding expeditions between hordes, there can be no such thing as a
yirt' amini holding of the district wherein he died. Moreover there are
numbers of the Tiwi whose fathers and grandfathers died young, and the
essence of the system is that the grandfather should have been old enough
to have sufficient male children and grandchildren to enforce the claim.

It can easily be seen from the above how it comes about that each
horde has a number of names, since each one of the *yirt' amini* group-names 621
is liable to be applied to the whole horde merely by adding *-ila* or *-ula* to 101
the name of the district they control.

Spencer's list of horde names is at variance with mine, because he 101
did not realize this. Out of six men of the *Tiklanwila*, one might easily 114
get six different answers to his question as to their "country," each 103
giving the name of his *yirt' amini* group. It is quite possible that the 621
horde names that are used here—*Tiklanwila*, *Mumupula*, etc.—are really
yirt' amini names that have become extended to include a whole horde
either by the identification of a very powerful *yirt' amini* group with a horde
in the eyes of the rest of the tribe or by the former horde name becoming
tabu and a *yirt' amini* name being substituted. This view is strengthened
by the fact that in one or two of the hordes, the horde name is still in use
as the name of a district. Thus whereas the whole of the territory of the
Wilraggwila on the north of Melville is technically *Wilraggu*, the native
name for Karslake Island, a small portion of that territory, is *Wilraggu*.
Similarly *Malau* is a creek in the territory of the *Malanila* horde.

A man is born into the horde of his father. Should his father die and 591
his mother be taken by a member of another horde he goes with her, and 611
WHILE THE WOMAN WILL ALWAYS BE LOOKED UPON 621
AS BELONGING TO HER FORMER HORDE, THE CHILD 708
CHANGES HIS, TAKING THAT OF HIS STEPFATHER.

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591 while the woman will always be looked upon as belonging to her former
621 horde, the child changes his, taking that of his step-father. Very often
(882) when a boy is aged about 14 or 15 he is taken by his mother's brother
of another horde to live with that horde for some years. Often he is
initiated there and not quite so often he will spend the rest of his life there.
It is no uncommon occurrence for a man to have spent his adolescent
years in two or three different hordes in addition to the one into which he
was born, always under the supervision of one or other of his classificatory
mother's brothers. Two cases at least occurred in the last few years of
young unmarried men who had been reared and initiated in one horde
leaving that horde of their own free will and going to live permanently
in another because they considered they had there more chance of obtaining
a wife.²

On the other hand, a woman will usually be looked upon as belonging
to the same horde all her life, even though she marries young and goes to
live with another horde. To the tribe at large such a woman is for
example a *Tiklanila*, though she has lived with the *Yimpi* ever since her
marriage, and her *Tiklanila* origin will never be forgotten.

As a result of these conflicting customs it is difficult to lay down any
definite rule in regard to membership of the horde. The best generaliza-
tion is perhaps to say that a woman retains all her life a connection with
the horde into which she is born no matter where patrilocal marriage
may lead her, while a man on the other hand belongs to whatever horde he
is living with at the moment, this being normally but not at all invariably
his father's horde.

TOTEMISM

614 The Tiwi have a system of matrilineal totemic clans. Each clan
has a special relation to one or sometimes to two and in two instances
to three species of natural objects. The members of the clan have
a solidarity of their own, helping each other in tribal fights, speaking
of each other as "brother" despite the variation in their actual blood
relationship, and not marrying women of their own totem. There are,
101 however, few of the distinctive features of Australian totemism as known
614 from other parts of the continent. They eat their totem without any
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² It was hardly a logical proceeding as one left the *Tiklanila* for the *Mumpala* and
the other (quite independently) left the *Mumpala* for the *Tiklanila*.

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restriction; they have no ceremonies for the increase of the totem species.

Since the totem of a child is that of its mother it follows that the members of one totemic clan are found in different hordes, and inversely each horde contains persons of several totemic clans. Nevertheless each totem is associated in the minds of the natives with a particular locality or district. This association appears in the myths, there being a number of stories which connect particular natural species with particular localities. Thus each clan may be said to have its ancestral home or centre, but there is little or nothing of any feeling of reverence or ritual attachment to the home of one's totem. Taking it all in all Tiwi totemism does not amount to very much compared with the elaborate forms of totemism found in other parts of Australia.

The word for totem and totemic clan is *pukui*. But the same word means also "sun" and in addition "breath." The connection between these three concepts denoted by one word is not at all apparent.

The totems are grouped into three phratries. The term phratry is here used in the sense of an exogamous group containing a number of clans and not being a moiety. The phratries are unnamed. Should a man want to mention a phratry he will call it by the name of one of the totemic clans composing it. He will generally use the name of his own totem clan if his own phratry is in question, or that of the clan that is powerful in the phratry. Thus the phratry that I am calling Phratry 1, will more often be called *Tjilarui* than anything else because at the present time the *Tjilarui* clan is very numerous and many of them are the kind of people who are usually much in the public eye. For a similar reason Phratry 2 is more often called *Timiririgui* than anything else, and Phratry 3 is usually *Tokwombui*. There is a much stronger feeling of solidarity with one's clan than with one's phratry, which will perhaps explain that while the clan name is very important there seems no need, or much less need, for any specific name for the phratry.

A complete list of the clans and their totems is given below. Each clan name has three forms, masculine singular, feminine singular, and plural, and these are given in the list in this order.

Clan Name	Totems
Phratry 1.	
(a) <i>Tjilati, Tjilariga, Tjilarui</i>	jaberoo
(b) <i>Ariri, Aruvidina, Aruvidui</i>	mullet

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614 Phratry 1 (continued) Clan Name

Totems

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|---|------------|
| (c) <i>Mandubani, Mandubuka, Mandubowi</i> | fly |
| (d) <i>Uduyini, Uduwa, Uduwui</i> | crocodile |
| (e) <i>Milubruinila, Milubrukula, Milubruwila</i> | cockatoo |
| (f) <i>Mierdi, Mierdina, Mierdwi</i> | pandanus |
| (g) <i>Tanikini, Taninka, Tanikwi</i> | flying fox |
| (h) <i>Mutuninila, Mutungula, Mutunibila</i> | a fish |
| (i) <i>Timilani, Timiluka, Timilowi</i> | sand fly |

Phratry 2.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| (a) <i>Timiririnini, Timiririna, Timiririgwi</i> | woolly-butt tree |
| (b) <i>Yarinabila, Yarinabunula, Yarinabila</i> | red paint, sugar bag,
(wild honey) |
| (c) <i>Orandjani, Orandjuka, Orandjowi</i> | stingray |
| (d) <i>Parolinginila, Parolingunula, Parolingibila</i> | mud |
| (e) <i>Iliti, Ilitina, Ilitwi</i> | <i>malikini</i> (a wild fruit) |
| (f) <i>Andjulini, Andjuluma, Andjulwi</i> | rain, turtle |

Phratry 3.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) <i>Tokwombini, Tokwombuka, Tokwombwi</i> | a bird |
| (b) <i>Aringuinila, Aringuinula, Aringuwila</i> | stones |
| (c) <i>Pinaluwini, Pinaluwunula, Pinaluwila</i> | wood |
| (d) <i>Walikwinila, Walikwinula, Walikwila</i> | stars |
| (e) <i>Wirnigiti, Wirnigitinga, Wirnigitwi</i> | bloodwood, <i>wipari</i> and a
kind of fish. |
| (f) <i>Taparini, Taparina, Taparwi</i> | moon |
| (g) <i>Djabijabini, Djabijabunula, Djabijabwi</i> | march fly. |

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614 In reference to the list it must be pointed out that among the Tiwi there are two languages; one is used in common everyday conversation, and the other is a sacred language used on ceremonial occasions, in ritual songs and formulae. Most of the clan-names of the above list are words belonging not to the ordinary language but to the esoteric language. Such words would never be used in ordinary conversation *except as totemic names*. A bloodwood tree in ordinary speech is *urnalaka*, the wild plum is *malikini*, rain is *paketirina*, the cockatoo is *ingaga*, trees are *tuka* and so on. Of the twenty-two clans nine are normally called by a word in use in the ordinary language; the other thirteen have names taken from the sacred language.

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Sir Baldwin Spencer apparently failed to distinguish between the

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sacred and the ordinary language, with the result that his list of Tiwi clans 198
and their totems is confused and inaccurate.⁴ 614

The Tiwi do not seem to associate very closely the totemic clan 614
and the object that is the totem of the clan. For instance a man of the 771
Udunui considers himself as *Udunui*, not as a crocodile, which he normally
thinks of as *irungrabai*. The bond of solidarity is between one member
of the clan and another rather than between a member of the clan and his
totem.

So much is this the case that it is occasionally difficult to ascertain
what is the natural object which gives the clan its name, *i.e.*, what is the
totem of the clan. The *Ariigwila* are a case in point. In order to find
what natural object was the emblem of this clan recourse had to be had
to a few old men of the clan who were apparently the only people in the
tribe who knew what natural object was the emblem of the *Ariigwila*.
Everyone knew that a number of men, women and children were *Ariigwila*,
thought of them and referred to them as *Ariigwila*, but very few members
of the community connected them in any way with stones—"any kind of
stones"—which according to these old men, are the *Ariigwila* totemic
emblem.

With regard to the origin of the totemic clans and their names the 773
natives say that the system of *pukui* was instituted by the old men a very
long time ago. One old man said at some time in the distant past
"Udunui nia *pukui* kapi *Primandua*—Udunui is my totem at *Primandua*,"
and so everyone knew his totem was *udunui*. Knowing their legends
everyone knew the connection between *Udunui* and *Primandua* since it is
at this place, a district in Bathurst Island, that *Mnuntni*, the father of all
crocodiles, still has his home. Another old man decided upon *manubani*
as his *pukui* because his favourite camping ground was at *Pripanyimili*
which has a mythological association with *mandubuka* (the sand fly), such
association being founded no doubt on the fact that sand flies breed in
great numbers in the mangrove swamps of that region.

The *Ariigwila* (the stone totem) are closely associated with a famous
rock in *Migu* called *Warukwompi* which, due no doubt to a hollow interior,
gives forth a roll like thunder when beaten with a stick and hence is a
sacred object to the natives. The former home of the *Ariigwila* is in the

⁴ Spencer, *Nation Tribes of the Northern Territory*, page 200.

773 vicinity of this rock, so the legend runs, and they are often called the *Wurukwompila*.

The *Timiririni* are said to have come originally from a small island off the coast of *Wraggu* where the *timiririga* (woolly-butt tree) is especially prolific due to the fact that it was here that *Prondupu*, the original mythological woolly-butt, settled after the battle at *Tajio* between the animal-men.

So the story goes on throughout the list of totems. It is not a myth properly so called since mythological figures are in it only incidentally. As told by the Tiwi it is a rationalized explanation on a basis of local geography and the desires of old men generations ago.

162 The clans vary greatly in size. The largest clan, *Mierdni*, numbers
614 132 persons whereas the *Parolingibila* has only six and the *Taparni* only two. The distribution of the population amongst the clans and the hordes will be dealt with in a later paper in which the results of a census of the Tiwi population will be given.

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